

ORAL HEALTH CARE UTILIZATION

Regular dental care is essential to promote oral health and to prevent and treat tooth decay and infection. Untreated dental disease can produce significant pain and disability, and can result in tooth loss. In addition to daily brushing and flossing, the American Dental Association recommends regular dental exams and cleanings.¹⁵ In 2011, women were somewhat more likely to have a past-year dental visit than men (64.6 and 57.8 percent, respectively). Among both men and women, those with greater household incomes were more likely to have had a dental visit. For example, 82.3 percent of

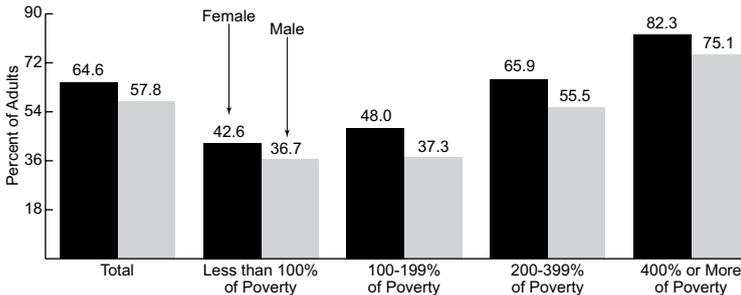
women with household incomes of 400 percent or more of poverty had a past year dental visit, compared to 42.6 percent of women with incomes less than 100 percent of poverty.

Cost is a significant barrier to appropriate utilization of dental care. In 2011, only 20.4 percent of adults had private insurance coverage that included dental care (data not shown). Medicaid and Medicare generally do not cover dental care and even private plans with dental coverage contain limited benefits with high cost-sharing.¹⁶ In 2011, 16.4 percent of women reported that they did not obtain needed dental care in the past year because they could not afford it; this was slightly higher than the per-

centage of men who reported an unmet need for dental care due to cost (13.0 percent). The likelihood of not getting dental care due to cost varies significantly by health insurance coverage. For example, only 7.0 percent of women with private insurance that included dental benefits reported that they did not obtain needed dental care in the past year due to costs, which nearly doubles to 13.7 percent of women with private insurance that did not include dental benefits. However, the likelihood of not getting needed dental care because of cost was considerably higher for women with public insurance (22.7 percent) and highest for women without any insurance (36.3 percent).

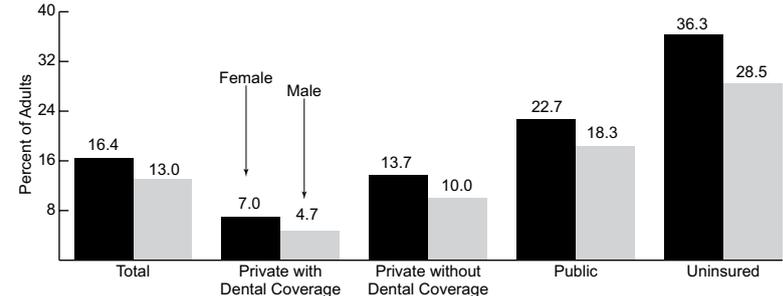
Past-Year Dental Visit Among Adults Aged 18 and Older, by Poverty Level,* 2011

Source II.20: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics, National Health Interview Survey



Unmet Need for Dental Care Due to Cost Among Adults Aged 18 and Older,* by Health Insurance Coverage,** 2011

Source II.20: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics, National Health Interview Survey



*Reported needing dental care in the past year, but not getting it because of costs; all estimates are age-adjusted. **Private coverage includes persons with any private insurance, either alone or in combination with public coverage; public includes those covered only by government programs such as Medicaid, Medicare, military plans, and state-sponsored health plans.

*Poverty level, defined by the U.S. Census Bureau, was \$23,021 for a family of four in 2011; all estimates are age-adjusted.